

BOARD OF SELECTMEN-Working Session

Minutes of

November 6, 2007

Chairman McArdle called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. Board members present in addition to Chairman McArdle were Richard Gandt, Stephen Clark, Boyd Jackson, and Richard Carlson. Of the Selectmen's staff, Town Administrator Virginia Wilder, and Board Secretary Donna Rich, were in attendance.

Chairman McArdle opened the meeting with a statement regarding issues relative to practices within the Fire Department that he feels are matter of concern that require action on the part of the Board. He further explained that, in his opinion, there are primarily two issues that need to be addressed. These are: 1) the Mutual Aid Agreements the Fire Chief has executed with surrounding communities for medical emergency services, particularly the agreement between Topsfield and Middleton for ambulance services and 2) the amount of money being spent on overtime within the Department.

On the matter of Mutual Aid Agreements, Selectman Clark expressed his concern that it would be inappropriate to revoke such agreements until such time as new mutual aid agreements had been prepared and were agreeable with at least some of the surrounding communities. He stated that he believes that it would be irresponsible of the Selectmen not to have some mutual aid agreements in effect at all times. It was decided that Mutual Aid Agreements between municipalities containing financial payment provisions, such as the current agreement with Middleton, are contractual agreements requiring the approval of the Board of Selectmen both as a matter of law and as to who has the authority to determine policy for Town Departments. Therefore, Ms. Wilder will research mutual aid agreements, including the limits of the Chief's authority under the so-called Strong Chief Law and will collect information regarding the terms of other agreements and will prepare a new draft format for mutual aid agreements going forward.

There followed some discussion on questions that the Board has in reference to policy and procedures of the Fire Department. As Fire Departments generally operate under Standard Operating Procedures or Guideline (SOGs), it was agreed that the Chairman will request from the Fire Chief copies of any SOGs that the Topsfield Fire Department uses in the deployment Firefighters to fires or other emergencies so the Board can better understand the operations of the department.

Chairman McArdle also committed to penning a motion for the Board to vote a motion regarding the Mutual Aid Agreements.

At 6:05 PM, Chairman McArdle entertained a motion to adjourn, Selectman Clark seconded motion; so voted 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Rich, Secretary
Selectmen's Office

Approved as written at the January 7, 2008 Board of Selectmen's meeting.